



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

April 29, 2015 at 4:30 p.m.
Council Chambers

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Ian Kohen, Chairperson
John Stroh, Vice-Chairperson
Trena Carter, Treasurer
Kelly Benjamin, Secretary
Richard Gold
Greg Lewis
Gil Palmer
Sameer Samudra

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Rhea Baker-Ipek
Annette Barnes
Tony McClendon

STAFF PRESENT

Aida Ramirez, Director
Molly Connor, Deputy Director
Betsy Schuette, Secretary

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

GUESTS PRESENT

Dennis Glade, *The Republic*; Brian Umsteadt, Pride Alliance; Ann Jones; Sondra Bolte; Connie Fox; S. Brian Walters, Pride Alliance; Jill Tasker, President of Pride Alliance; Sarah Gray, Inclusive Community Coalition; Sandra McCoy; Ed Fox; Betty Haven; Lanny C. Lawler

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Commissioners had previously been sent the March minutes to review. **Commissioner Carter moved to approve the revised March minutes as submitted. Commissioner Lewis seconded. Motion carried. March minutes were approved.**

TREASURER'S REPORT

Commissioner Carter reported that revenue for ticket sales was \$7,488.60 and \$131.40 in fees for PayPal, bringing the balance of the Donations Account to \$14,376.44. The MACDA Video Grant had balance of \$2,988.00 with no activity. **Commissioner Palmer moved that the Treasurer's Report be approved. Commissioner Stroh seconded. Motion carried. The April Treasurer's Report was approved.**

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

No report.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Ramirez did not prepare a Director's Report due to the following night's Annual Dinner. Director Ramirez presented the Commissioners with bound copies of the Annual Report and a copy of the program for the Annual Dinner. Director Ramirez said that she will be reporting the statistics of case work at the May Commission meeting.

DISCUSSION

AD HOC COMMITTEE:

Chairperson Kohen reported the Commission's intention to create an Ad Hoc Committee to identify possible changes to the Human Rights Commission Ordinance and the City Ordinance. Chairperson Kohen thanked the guests for attending the meeting and for the information they had presented to the Ad Hoc Committee to use as a reference. Chairperson Kohen reported that the Ad Hoc Committee will be collecting as much data from as many sources as possible.

Brian Walters with Pride Alliance stated that the main reason that the guests were present was to demonstrate to the Commissioners how important this issue is to them. He said that it might be a good time to re-approach this topic, given the issues for them at the state level due to the RFRA from the previous month. Brian expressed his appreciation on behalf of Pride Alliance for the help that the Commission has provided to them. He stated that they would like to continue to move forward and

bring Columbus into the 21st Century with a fully inclusive Human Rights Ordinance. Brian stated that since the State of Indiana passed the RFRA, three (3) cities in Indiana have updated their human rights ordinances to include sexual orientation and gender identity. He said that he believes the cities are Muncie, Hammond, and Martinsville.

Sondra Bolte with Pride Alliance and Inclusive Community Coalition stated to the Commissioners that they are willing to help as a resource in anyway needed.

Chairperson Kohen officially created an Ad Hoc Committee to look at the Human Rights Ordinance and the Human Rights Rules and Regulations to determine if they are sufficient or if there are opportunities for improvement. The Committee will research if there are improvements for the LGBT community, as well any other community classes. The Committee will also research other cities that have adopted these amendments, how they accomplished it, what those cities have learned from those changes, and research from any legal briefs or other related resources. Discussion ensued.

Director Ramirez stated that, although those protections are not in the ordinance, the Commission has always tried to take cases where there is an enforceable action first. She added that if anyone feels that he/she has been discriminated against, he/she should come to the Human Rights Commission and not think that he/she is excluded from the ordinance. Chairperson Kohen stated for the record that the purpose of the Ad Hoc Committee is to investigate opportunities to improve and change the Human Rights Commission Ordinance and the City of Columbus Ordinance, to be more inclusive across the board, and to make a recommendation to City Council and the Mayor. Discussion ensued.

Vice-Chairperson Stroh selected members for the Ad Hoc Committee: Commissioners Barnes, Samudra, and Palmer. Prior to the meeting, Commissioner Barnes notified Commissioners she would not be present at the meeting but formally requested consideration and expressed her interest in being selected as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee.

ANNUAL DINNER PREPARATION UPDATE:

- Director Ramirez reviewed the program with the Commissioners and informed them of their volunteer responsibilities at the Annual Dinner.
- Director Ramirez briefed the Commissioners of the check-in process at the Annual Dinner. Director Ramirez reported the current ticket purchase information and financial numbers.
- Director Ramirez stated that there are still tickets available.
- Director Ramirez informed the Commissioners that there are student volunteers and volunteers from Volunteers in Action. She asked Commissioners to arrive by 5:50 p.m.
- Discussion ensued.

ACTION ITEMS

No Action Items.

LIAISON REPORTS

- Commissioner Lewis reported that he attended the first CAMEO meeting since the end of Dance Marathon. He stated that Deputy Director Connor attended as well. The meeting was April 8th at the Chamber of Commerce with the Korean Association as the host association. The Korean Association presented a video on the economic miracles in South Korea. Commissioner Lewis reported that CAMEO has received a \$10,000 grant from the Heritage Fund for Columbus Got Talent. More information is located on CAMEO's website. Auditions will be held at Southside Elementary School on September 15th¹ and the finals at Columbus North High School on September 29th². The CAMEO Annual Meeting will be on Tuesday, May 12th at the Learning Center. The reception will begin at 5:15 p.m. and the program will start at 6:00 p.m. Sherry Stark

¹ The date for the Columbus Got Talent auditions has changed to August 15th.

² The date for the Columbus Got Talent finals has changed to August 29th.

will be this year's keynote speaker. Rocio Rodriguez will step down as the CAMEO president and Annushka Chin Fong will be the new president. The Indian Association will host its Holy Color Festival at Clifty Park on April 11th. The Columbus Chinese Association will host the May Flower Ball on May 9th at 6:30 p.m.

- Commissioner Barnes: Not present, no report.
- Commissioner Stroh: No report.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Carter made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Stroh seconded. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.